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Programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011

Joint Inspection Unit

Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the standards of accommodation for air travel (A/65/348) and the report of the Secretary-General on the report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) on the feasibility of harmonizing standards of air travel (A/65/386). The Advisory Committee also had before it, for information, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of travel arrangements within the United Nations system and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments thereon and those of CEB (A/65/338 and Add.1). During its consideration of the reports the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. The report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel provides information on the use of first-class travel by delegations and by the President of the General Assembly, as well as exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel authorized by the Secretary-General for the two-year period ended 30 June 2010 and comparative statistics for the two-year period ended 30 June 2008. The Advisory Committee notes that the standards of air travel at the United Nations are governed by General Assembly resolutions and decisions, including resolutions 42/214, 45/248 A and 53/214 and decisions 40/555, 44/442, 46/450 and 57/589.

3. For the United Nations Secretariat and other United Nations entities combined, an additional cost of $537,654 was incurred for 243 authorized exceptions between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2008, while an additional cost of $841,920 was incurred for 334 authorized exceptions between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2010, representing higher costs of $304,266 (56 per cent) as a result of an increase of 91 authorized exceptions (37 per cent) (A/65/348, tables 1-4). The Advisory Committee was informed that the increase is mainly due to exceptions made for medical reasons; for

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those donating services free of charge; and for travel of security officers. The Committee was also provided with a table showing exceptions for air travel from 1990 to 2010. The Committee notes that the period 2009-2010 has the highest number of authorized exceptions over the past 20 years (see annexes I and II).

4. **The Advisory Committee notes that travel data for the United Nations Secretariat and other United Nations entities is presented in four separate tables (see A/65/348, tables 1-4) and requests that, in future, a combined table be included showing all authorized exceptions for the respective time periods. Further, the Committee was informed that the above-noted additional cost incurred represents the difference between the travel entitlement and the actual amount paid for authorized exceptions and requests that such clarifying information be incorporated into future reports of the Secretary-General.**

5. In response to General Assembly resolutions 60/255, 62/238 and 63/268, the Secretary-General has presented the report of CEB on the feasibility of harmonizing standards of air travel (A/65/386). The Advisory Committee notes that among the entities under the authority of the Secretary-General (i.e., the United Nations and its funds and programmes), many key travel policies have already been implemented in a number of entities, including utilizing a city as a gateway for travel, the inclusion of self-certification procedures and the implementation of procedures for recovering unwarranted travel expenses (see A/65/338/Add.1, paras. 9, 10 and 11).

6. In its resolution 63/268, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to explore all possible options, including the use of mileage points accumulated from official travel, for reducing the cost of air travel. The Advisory Committee notes from the report of the Joint Inspection Unit that the majority of organizations do not have programmes for the recovery of frequent flyer miles for tickets purchased by them, and that the majority also stated that programmes for utilizing frequent flyer miles would be an expensive and cumbersome use of administrative resources (A/65/338, paras. 97 and 98). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the cost of administering an organizational frequent flyer programme would exceed its benefits. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee was informed that those commercial airlines contacted by the Secretariat with regard to the possible use of frequent flyer miles under a United Nations account, were instead more receptive to offering discounts on air tickets purchased by the United Nations and its entities. The Advisory Committee notes the difficulties identified by the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretary-General with regard to the consolidation and administration of organizational frequent flyer miles. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the issue should be kept under review and encourages the United Nations and its entities to continue to explore other ways to reduce overall travel expenditures and looks forward to any new proposals in this regard.**

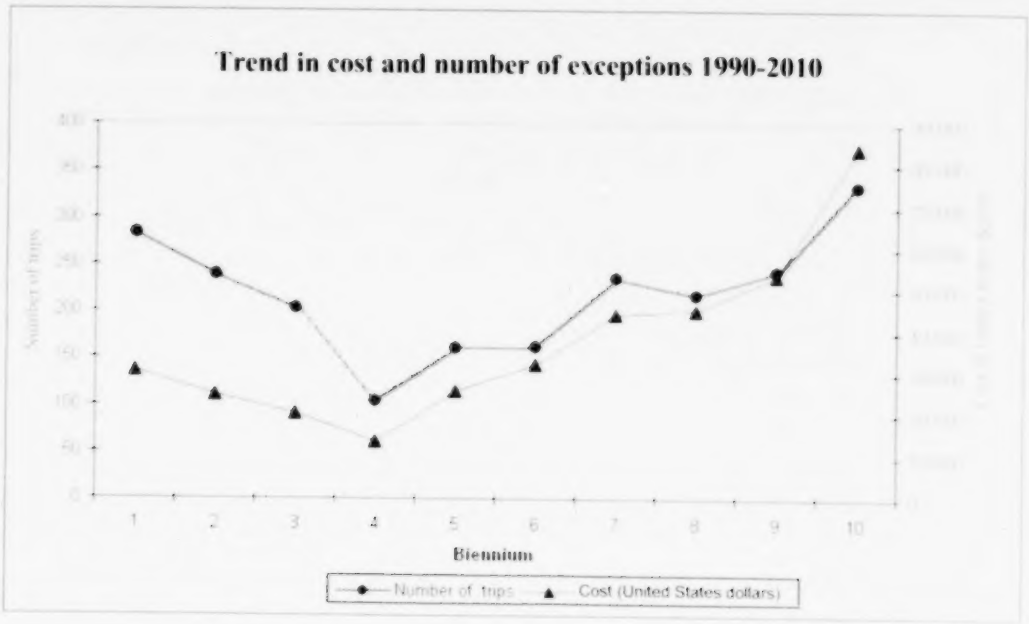
7. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the Secretary-General's report on the standards of accommodation for air travel (A/65/348).**

Annex I

Comparative data on exceptions for air travel (1990-2010)

Period	Total No. of exceptions	Annual change		Additional cost of exceptions (United States dollars)	Annual change	
		Number	Percentage		Amount (United States dollars)	Percentage
1990-1992	282			307 973		
1992-1994	239	(43)	(15)	249 247	(58 726)	(19)
1994-1996	203	(36)	(15)	203 273	(45 974)	(18)
1996-1998	103	(100)	(49)	136 140	(67 133)	(33)
1998-2000	160	57	55	256 947	120 807	89
2000-2002	161	1	1	320 791	63 844	25
2002-2004	236	75	47	442 472	121 681	38
2004-2006	217	(19)	(8)	451 930	9 458	2
2006-2008	243	26	12	537 654	85 724	19
2008-2010	334	91	37	841 920	304 266	57

Annex II


Trend in cost and number of exceptions 1990-2010
Number of trips
Biennium
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Number of trips
Cost (United States dollars)